

REMARKS

In response to the above Office Action, claims 1-16 have been amended to delete improper "preferably" clauses, to avoid improper multiple dependency, to use consistent terminology and the indefinite article where appropriate and generally to place the claims in more traditional U.S. format. Support for new claims 17-30 can be found in the subject matter deleted from the claims from which they depend. No amendments were made in view of the cited references.

In the Office Action the Examiner rejected claims 1-16 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) for being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,124,426 to Sugimoto et al., hereafter Sugimoto, or EP 1084739, hereafter EP'739.

The present invention claims a process wherein the foaming agent (the "secondary liquid stream") is added to the polymer melt (the "main stream") by spraying so as to divide each second liquid stream into several fractional streams. The apparatus claim includes a spray device which allows "each secondary liquid stream to be divided into several fractional streams." It is submitted that neither of the cited references disclose or suggest such a spray arrangement or device.

In Sugimoto there is disclosed the supply of a "blowing aid" to a molten polystyrene in an addition nozzle apparatus. It is stated that the "blowing aid" is added "in the direction opposite to the direction of the flow of the molten polystyrene." (See Column 5, lines 22-27). There is no disclosure of the "blowing aid" being sprayed into the molten polystyrene "so as to be divided into several fractional streams." It is made clear that the alleged effectiveness of the invention disclosed in Sugimoto is derived from the direction of the flow of the blowing aid. Note with reference to Fig. 1 of Sugimoto, that there is only one stream of blowing aid 6 being added via line 10

opposite to molten polystyrene 1 in apparatus 2. Moreover, there is no teaching or suggestion whatsoever that spraying according to the present invention has the benefits that are disclosed and illustrated in the Examples of the present application.

Since this feature at least is lacking in Sugimoto, it cannot be considered to anticipate applicants' claims. Its withdrawal as a ground of rejection under §102(b) is therefore requested.

In EP'739 there is disclosed the use of a "stripping agent" to aid devolatilisation. This stripping agent is introduced by an injection device 3 directly into the inlet of a static mixer (1). There is no disclosure nor suggestion of a pre-mixture of polymer melt and foaming agent before the pre-mixture is introduced into the static mixture that is a feature of the process claims of the present application.

In addition, there is no disclosure of stripping agent being sprayed into the molten polymer "so as to be divided into several fractional streams" or a spray device that accomplishes such a spraying of the agent. Moreover, there is no teaching or suggestion of the beneficial results obtained by spraying the foaming/stripping agent as claimed as set forth in the Examples of the present application, i.e., a reduction in the "hammering phenomena." See comparative Example 2.

Accordingly, since these features are not disclosed in EP'739 either, it cannot be considered to anticipate applicants' claims. Its withdrawal as a ground of rejection under §102(b) is requested.

It is believed claims 1-30 are in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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